RESOURCE PROTECTION AT EASTERN STATES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EASTERN STATES OFFICE
JANUARY 1981

RESOURCE PROTECTION AT EASTERN STATES

This pamphlet is intended to introduce law enforcement officials — along with any other members of the public who may be interested — to the Resource Protection Program at the Bureau of Land Management's Eastern States Office. The protection of the natural resources in our care is a Bureau-wide program. These pages highlight the areas in which the Eastern States Office is most actively involved.

If you have reason to believe that a violation of law concerning one of the programs under our jurisdiction has taken place, please contact us. We can provide you with specific information about the Federal laws and regulations involved, and perhaps assist you — or ask for your assistance — in any ensuing investigation. Contact the Eastern States Director or the Special Agent-in-Charge, at:

Bureau of Land Management
Eastern States Office
350 South Pickett Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22304
Telephone: (703) 235-2833

WILD HORSE AND BURRO ADOPTIONS

Wild horses and burros on western public lands come under BLM jurisdiction, and are protected by law under the *Wild, Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971* and the *Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978.* As the most humane approach to maintaining an ecological balance between the herds and their habitat, BLM rounds up excess wild horses and burros from depleted rangeland areas and makes them available for adoption by private individuals. More than 20,000 wild horses and burros have been adopted nationwide — more than 4,000 of them in the Eastern States area. Adopted animals remain U.S. Government property for at least one year; adopters enter into legally binding agreements with BLM, assuring that they will provide humane treatment to the animals, and will not sell them, exploit them for commercial purposes (such as using them for bucking stock), or convert them to commercial products. After providing one year of humane care to a wild horse or burro, an adopter may apply to BLM for title to the animal. If BLM grants title, the wild horse or burro becomes a privately owned animal, and is no longer subject to restrictions under the two acts.

When an animal is removed from the range, a freeze mark is applied to the left side of the neck, under the mane. The freeze mark utilizes the Alpha angle system of coded numbering, adopted because it is almost impossible to alter. The freeze mark identifies the animal as a protected wild horse or burro, and shows its year of birth and registration number. A Federal freeze mark will begin with this prefix ⌊ and look like this: ⌊>=^II<L∨. Sale or mistreatment of an animal identified by this freeze mark may be a violation of Federal law, and should be reported to us. BLM maintains computer listings of all adopted animals and their adopters, and performs compliance checks to ensure proper treatment.

READEX MICRO best copy available

OIL & GAS LEASING

Under the Simultaneous Oil and Gas Leasing System — commonly known as the oil and gas lottery — BLM leases the rights to explore and drill for oil and gas on tracts of government-owned land or minerals that do not lie within known geological structures or producing oil and gas fields. These are tracts on which pre-existing noncompetitive oil and gas leases have expired, and been terminated, relinquished or cancelled. For each drawing, the local BLM office issues a list of the tracts in its jurisdiction that will be offered for leasing. Applicants may then file only one entry card for each tract in which they are interested. Cards are then drawn at random or selected at random by computer. An applicant whose card has been selected may purchase a lease on the tract for an annual rent of $1.00 an acre.

Many of these tracts have no value. In some cases, however, tracts show sufficient promise so that oil companies or other concerns may offer to buy leases from the lottery winners. BLM does not classify the tracts it offers according to their potential value, nor is any sort of extensive geologic information available to most prospective leaseholders. Partly because of this, private filing services have sprung up to advise lottery participants or even file for the tracts on their behalf. Filing services, however, are private concerns, neither endorsed by nor connected with BLM or any other agency of the Federal Government. Suspected criminal fraud on the part of some filing services led the Secretary of the Interior to suspend the drawing in February 1980 while new procedures were devised to prevent abuses. The lottery has since been reinstated, but the Interior Department and BLM are still investigating criminal activities surrounding the drawing system, and encourage the public to bring suspected unscrupulous practices to the attention of the Department's Office of the Inspector General.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural artifacts found on the public lands are U.S. Government property. The protection of these artifacts and the archeological sites on which they are found — such as Indian ruins and colonial settlements — is the responsibility of BLM. The destruction and theft of these resources is a growing problem. Vandalism is spreading as recreationists visit previously inaccessible areas on motorcycles and other off-road vehicles. Looting is increasing as the commercial value of pottery and other artifacts goes up. Some thefts are committed by amateur treasure hunters. More serious, large-scale thefts are committed by commercial suppliers, who have turned the discovery of rare historical relics into big business.

Most of the actual destruction and theft of cultural resources on the public lands takes place in the western states, simply because that is where most of the public lands are located. But the problem has much of its origins in the East, where wealthy private collectors and museums often purchase American antiquities without checking to see if the merchandise was acquired legally. Under the law, buyers of stolen U.S. government property are accessories to the theft of that property. In cooperation with western BLM enforcement officials, Eastern States Office special agents are investigating fencing operations and distribution routes for stolen relics — and desert plants, as well — on this side of the Mississippi.

UNAUTHORIZED USES

The discovery of significant minerals theft in the East first occurred in 1977, when a BLM inventory of Federal Mineral Ownership (FMO) in north-central Alabama revealed evidence of unauthorized mining of federally owned coal in the area. Investigations by BLM have led to criminal indictments and convictions.

The Bureau has stepped up its efforts to detect and prevent the unauthorized exploration for or removal of Federal minerals. The task is made complicated by two major factors. One is that FMO in the East occurs in relatively small and scattered tracts, making regular, on-site management infeasible in many cases. The second is that much of this FMO is located on split-estate lands — areas in which the minerals are federally owned, but where the surface belongs to State governments or private landowners. In many cases, even where the surface is federally owned, FMO tracts checkerboard with tracts of privately owned minerals.

One of the ways in which BLM's Eastern States Office now screens its far-flung mineral holdings for unauthorized uses is through the use of aerial photographs and satellite imagery. Resource specialists examine these pictures for areas in which surface disturbance has taken place and then compare these findings with land and mineral ownership maps to identify surface disturbance over FMO. If unauthorized use is suspected, BLM personnel can then have the sites inspected in person.

BLM is also concerned with unauthorized occupancy — cases in which individuals or business firms, without authorization, reside or have built structures on federally owned land. Camping and other recreational activities generally are permitted on the public lands, but private residential and commercial development are not. The possibility of unauthorized occupany under Eastern States jurisdiction is limited to the remaining tracts of public land in the East — primarily Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, upland tracts in Minnesota, and islands in Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for the people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

An agency of the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for the administration of the public lands and their various resources. BLM's role is defined by the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976,* which established the policy that the public lands will be retained under Federal ownership and managed in the public interest under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. BLM administers some 357 million acres of public lands — approximately 175 million acres in the lower 48 states and 182 million acres in Alaska — amounting to about one-fifth of the Nation's total land base. Through the sale of oil and gas leases, grazing rights, timber, minerals, and other raw materials and energy sources, the public lands are a substantial source of income to the Federal Treasury. The economy of many communities — particularly in the West — is based on activities stemming from the sale or lease of these resources.

EASTERN STATES OFFICE

BLM programs in the 31 states adjoining or east of the Mississippi River are the responsibility of BLM's Eastern States Office, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia. Public lands under BLM jurisdiction in the East amount to some 60,000 acres of surface (located primarily in the States of Minnesota, Louisiana and Florida); approximately 2,800 islands; approximately 25 million acres of Federal Mineral Ownership underlying private surface, State lands, and Federal surface under the jurisdiction of other Federal agencies such as the Forest Service or the Department of Defense; and an undetermined quantity of public lands, mostly adjoining rivers and coastlines, that were omitted from original surveys.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Eastern States Office
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